

THE NATIONAL ERA.

G. BAILEY, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR; JOHN G. WHITTIER, CORRESPONDING EDITOR.

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THE NATIONAL ERA.

WASHINGTON, MARCH 17, 1851.

For the National Era.

TO THE SPIRIT OF SONG.

MISS ALICE CAREY.

Come, sweet spirit, come, I pray,
Thou hast been too long away.
Come, and in the dreamland light,
Keep with me a tress to-night.

When the roses once at morn
Bound the golden stocks of o'er,
Shadowy hand, that none could see,
Gleamed along the field with me.

Come, and with thy violet white
Bind me to thy heart, and life,
That has vexed me with a sign
Which I tremble to divine.

At a black loom, sisters three
Saw I weeping; it can be,
Thought I, as I saw them croak
The white shuttles, 'tis a shroud.

Silently the loom they left,
Taking mingled warp and weft,
And, as with my bosom beat,
Measured me from head to feet.

Lies the loom, the drawing-hine,
Sweetest gentle love, I weep,
Tangled softly from my prayer,
By some Nereid's shining bair!

Or, when mortal hope withers,
Diedst thou, faithless, leave me too,
Blowing on thy loveliest,
Carries not my heart should bleed?

By this sudden chill I know
That it is, must be so—
Sprit of darkness, sisters three,
Lo, wait your ministry.

For the National Era.

LIFE ON PRAIRIE LA FLEUR.—No. 3.

BY MARY IRVING.

A Chapter for the sympathizing only.

A homely heading, to be sure; but as sure am I that it will strike home to the hearts of some of my readers; and as for the others, why, they have taken the hint already, and turned to a more dignified column.

This "sum of all in-door tribulation in one word," as I once heard an impatient housewife style it, is not limited to our prairie borders, surely. Older and abler pens than mine have often portrayed, most graphically and amusingly, the domestic troubles and trials of various corners of the civilized world. But so important a feature ought not to be left unsketched, in a portrait of Life on Prairie de la Fleur.

I can give it no more refined name; for servants are a commodity as little known here as slaves in Yankee land. All are equal in name and rank, as well as in constitutional rights; and your brother or sister of Adam's family who tenters for "a consideration" or his or her help to your necessity, must be a sharer in all the rights and privileges you could accord to the most exalted of humanity.

Please men, and wouldn't ye be wanting to hire a wild-eyed Irish fellow one evening, at the door of the domicil I called my home for a season.

Now, what with house-building, haying, and harvesting, any number of hands could be made serviceable at that juncture; and my hostess invited Paddy into kitchen quarters. He tossed curious glances about him, and entertained the girls with his rich brogue, till the master of the house returned.

Shure, it's from County Cork, sur, wid me fethered and the six childer, six months agone this blessed Sunday that's now past?

"But how came you to leave your family?" "Och!" he shrugged his shoulders, and stopped to take a fresh spoonful of mush and milk; "me mither—rist her soul out of purgatory! I went off in the fever, and me stip—mither was the div! on't chit to me; so I've made a clean run away of it!"

No very favorable recommendation, to be sure, but we agreed to keep Pat a few days on trial.

The next day he was sent into the clearing lot with the hands, and demesne himself quite industriously during the morning hours. But with the shadows of sunset, Paddy presented his phiz again at our entrance-way, axe over shoulder, and red flannel sleeves rolled above his elbows.

"Please yer honor," he plead, twisting his hat where there had been a brim, and making an awkward scrape with his bare foot, "it's stirrin' on country I wot be, and be yer lawe!"

"What, Pat, don't you find your work easy enough?"

"As for the like of such an one as takes to it!" answered Pat, with a deprecating shrug of the shoulders. Our ragged recruit was discharged, with a hearty laugh at his expense.

Paddy's more profitable successor bore the name of Daniel, though his name was not to be found in the litter, and was of a despicable though somewhat amiable character. He was a scoundrel, ex-wasted in path of life; and it is to him that I am indebted to the story.

"Please yer honor," he plead, twisting his hat, to obtain the name of his master.

"Och!" he replied, "I'm a scoundrel, and a bad one; but I'm a good man, and a good master."

"The next application was more successful.

"Lucky for me she'd go with us," was the result of our most obstinate consultation of whipersnappers.

We had set our hearts on obtaining a "Yankee" girl, and bore her homemade as triumphantly as a fisher-boy might an especially fine trout.

But our rose of felicity was by no means thornless. Lydia certainly was a "genius" in kitchen tactics, compared with the tykes that had tried our patience; but like to many other geniuses, she was capricious, and most unmerciful. Her own cookery was bad, but she had no taste for anything rising to any theoretical notion of responsibility for the happiness of the family she had entered.

The physician who should refuse to arise from a snug bed at night, and risk his health for the sake of a suffering stranger, would be despised in this case where the people must assist, in order to carry out the law. No observing mind can doubt that public opinion through nine-tenths of our free territory is most decidedly opposed to that of the slaveholding South; but if inclination moved her to a trip into a neighbor's kitchen, or a stroll into the woods "perrying" duty never restrained her impulse, nor did her master's eyes follow her.

She was the domestic who realms this world-wide duty? "Here," and "here," voices reply; for there are a few such. If there were no law, we should be one degree nearer the Millennium!

Lydia's history is not broken, but she would have never opened her eyes to the world again.

She was a scoundrel, and a bad one; but I am indebted to the story.

He remained very quietly for several months, when some trifling disagreement with his Welsh or Dutch co-laborers awoke in his head the propensities of his race, and he too took leave of absence.

Quite a number of actors from various cliques passed over the stage of domestic affairs—sometimes half a dozen, more at a time, sometimes one "alone in his glory." One swarthy Scotchman, who absconded because he wasn't white. He was not from "the old land," that keeps green with the tears of his oppressed, and the bones of his dying children. He was a scurvy Romaniot, who squandered half his wages regularly in a spree every Sunday night, after having obtained absolution from the priest in the nearest village, at the confessional; and spurned every moral of meat on a Friday, to keep the balance of his bacon.

He remained very quietly for several months, when some trifling disagreement with his Welsh or Dutch co-laborers awoke in his head the propensities of his race, and he too took leave of absence.

Our dwelling was at quite a little distance from the spring, whose pure bright water gushed up fresh at our daily wants; and in want of an aqueduct to bring it to us, we sometimes made use of the hands in their leisure moments. One morning, our ever-helpful Hans Körner, (as relative of the illustrious German poet, be it hoped!) having filled the reservoir for use during the day, stood leaning idly upon a fowling piece, watching the hurried tide of breakfast operations.

"Here, my good fellow," cried one of the working bees, "take this pan of potatoes to wash; take the water from there," pointing to the reservoir. Going back in a moment, she found Hans, in his honest stupidity, leaning over the edge of the huge tub, as though he were about to make a voluntary immersion of himself.

"What is the master now?" she exclaimed.

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 1851.

G. BAILEY, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR; JOHN G. WHITTIER, CORRESPONDING EDITOR.

WHOLE NO. 220.

"Nix goot!" replied Hans, very innocently, sotto voce, holding up his dripping arm, from which he had rolled the tow sleeve to his very shoulder, and pointing into the troubled water below him. Darting forward, she burst into a fit of laughter, at seeing the whole colony of potatoes comely swimming at the bottom, while Hans was vainly endeavoring to fish them out again, at arm's length—a daughter only hampered by the provoking assurance of being obliged to tire her own arms in the service of replenishing the wasted fluid! All honor to the hard-working peasantry of Faderland! If sometimes dull of comprehension, they are always generous of heart; and never was there a more faithful, ready, and capable hand lent to our burden of business, than that of one kind Dutchman who followed.

Enough of the troubles in the line of the lordly sex; our feminine tribulations could boast an equal glory. Conceive, ye uninitiated in kitchen mysteries, if you can, of the delights of kitchen independence! the glory of holding undisputed sway over scuppernog, shad, diancon, and dish-kettle, "monarch of all you survey!" Such a glorious interregnum had worn off its charm of novelty, when we sought and found a raw Welsh dame, to take the "rod of iron" in hand. To be sure, she could scarcely stammer a sentence in English; but then, urged the gentleman, with as much penetration as people usually display in matters beyond their own experience, "you can easily make her understand by signs what you wish her to do."

Ruth stationed herself in the kitchen, and folded her hands in a quiet, supreme consciousness of her queenly dignity. How to penetrate her shield of ignorance was a master not easily solved. The confusion of tongues in the tower of Babel had made a deal of confusion in families. A Welsh girl, in a family of my acquaintance, much more intelligent than the one I have been writing about, being asked to bring a slice of cold pork to the table, rushed down to the cellar and dragged up the cold ham to the astonished breakfast circle!

Confusion was Ruth's prime minister; indeed, plato lost their places, knives and forks mated with the mugs, and spoons stood upon their own heads, to what and where it may be between beggars or horn-bones—in a shanty or in a palace. The bride looked very pretty in her unassuming blue dress home-fashioned for the occasion. As for the bridegroom, he brushed and pomaded his hair—twisted his collar and buttons, and then, with a look of blustery anticipation, failed to cast a glance downward to his host, which were garnished with trophies won from the March mud of the prairie path!

The cook had struck eight; a few neighbors who had happened in from good will or curiosity as usual, and the bridegroom came to lead out his bride before the face of "the minister."

"But what must I do?" he inquired, very anxiously, in a whisper. "I don't know at all about this getting married—do you?"

Not I, returned the puzzled bride. "I never heard of any such a thing as this!"

"Oh, go on!" exclaimed one of the family, laughing, "you cannot very well make a mistake! Now, stop, though you are told to bring a slice of cold pork to the table, rush down to the cellar and drag up the cold ham to the astonished breakfast circle!"

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